





The good old days

Energetic grandparents enjoy taking the kids on holidays, writes

Cheryl Critchley

GONE are the days when Nanna and Pop sat at home waiting for the grandchildren to visit.

Grandmas and grandpas are hitting the road and taking the kids with them on fun-filled holidays in Australia and overseas, giving parents a break and generations the chance to bond.

Some drive down the highway to Phillip Island or Ballarat. Others go much further.

One couple took their grandchildren to Disneyland in Los Angeles before cruising back on *Queen Mary 2's* maiden voyage.

Holidays with Kids editor Cathy Wagstaff says grandparent holidays are a godsend to the many families that have two parents working.

Christmas is an especially popular time, because holidays from work often don't cover the summer break.

Wagstaff says cruises are great for the older and younger generations, and can cost as little as \$100 a night a person.

"They have everything," she says. "They're just floating resorts.

"Even though the grandparents have the grandkids on the cruise, they still have time to have a holiday as well because the ships have kids' clubs."

Barwon Heads couple Prue and Philip Dodwell fly grandchildren Alexandra, 8, Charlie, 6, and Olivia, 3, to Sydney. They have visited family and attractions such as Taronga Zoo and riding the ferries.

Prue, 63, finds cheap airfares, which avoids having to spend long hours driving there in a car.

"A lot of our friends holiday with grandkids because it's a very special relationship with a limited time-span. The kids grow up so quickly," Prue says.

"They are keen to be with us and we all enjoy the experience. It also keeps us on our toes, outdoors and active."

Grandparent travel is limited only by imagination, budgets and fitness.

Some seniors are fighting fit, but others may have trouble traipsing around a theme park all day.

US grandmother Helena Koenig founded Grandtravel, which has specialised in grandparent-grandchild trips since 1986. She says that last year 10 per cent of US grandparents travelled with their grandchildren.

"It's the chance for both generations to learn more about each other in a relaxed and fun-filled setting," she says.

Also popular in Victoria are road trips in mobile homes and train travel to regional centres such as Bendigo, Ballarat and Warrnambool. V/Line has a new Family Traveller ticket that allows children to travel free around Victoria during off-peak accompanied by adults.

Jetstar's commercial group general manager, Bruce Buchanan, says "Grand Travel" is a growing trend that has been noticed by Jetstar and its industry partners. He says cheap airfares have made it easier for grandparents to take such trips with their grandchildren.

Novotel this month launched a Family & Novotel deal that includes large rooms, late check-out, the Nickelodeon TV channel, breakfast and a gift for children under 16.

Novotel brand manager Neil Scanlan says more grandparents are taking grandchildren away because today's grandparents tend to be active to a much older age than their predecessors.

So who pays for the trips?

Wagstaff says there is no protocol. It is up to individual families to discuss costs.

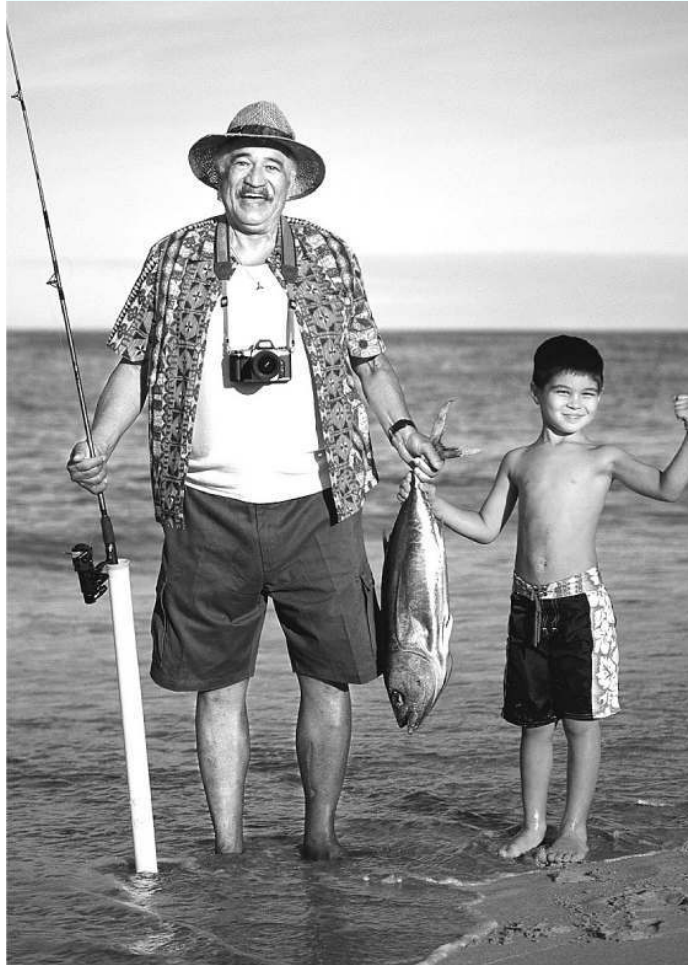
"(But) from what we see, it looks as if the grandparents are paying."

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Fishing fun:
(above) you should have seen the one that got away, it was "that" big.

Picture: Corbis

Head start: (left) playing with the grandkids keeps grandparents young.





Holidays with Kids

Holidaying with a family requires additional planning.

There are many more considerations than just jetting off as adults to wherever takes your fancy.

When considering a destination for a family holiday think about the ages of your children and the distances you are prepared to travel.

For instance, a three year old that is a handful driving to the Gold Coast is not an option for a 15-hour flight to Disneyland!

Younger children and babies generally cope well with air travel. The engine resonance seems to have a lulling effect and younger children will sleep well on a flight. It is a different story once they hit the Terrible Two's and become mobile.

As well as distance travelled, consider your destination. Third

World is fine for adventurous adults but not an option for young children.

Even the difference in interstate water here in Australia can cause an upset tummy, let alone countries that do not have the hygiene and sanitation standards we have at home.

Political issues are also to be taken into account. By this stage you are probably opting for a Queensland Island or somewhere interstate with friends and family.

Do not let the above considerations deter you from travelling overseas until your children are teenagers. Remember once they hit 12 they pay an adult airfare.

There are many destinations that suit families of all ages. This year I have sent a family with 2 small boys skiing to New Zealand, and another family with 3 children under 12 to

the Greek Islands, Rome and Paris. I currently have another family with 2 young teenagers on a Caribbean Cruise.

These are just a few examples of suitable destinations.

For further advice on this subject, or any other travel queries please contact Judy Briedis at Travel Dreams on 07 3342 6330 or judy@traveldreams.com.au

